

# **Community Assistantship Program**

## **Exploring Collaborative Opportunities in Natural Resource Planning and Conservation**

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# **Exploring Collaborative Opportunities in Natural Resource Planning and Conservation**

Prepared in partnership with  
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Prepared by  
Dawn Doering,  
Graduate Research Assistant,  
University of Minnesota  
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## **CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION**

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Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)  
University of Minnesota  
330 HHH Center  
301--19th Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455

Phone: (612) 625-1551

Fax: (612) 626-0273

E-mail: [cura@umn.edu](mailto:cura@umn.edu)

Web site: <http://www.cura.umn.edu>

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a global, non-profit organization with a mission of preserving “. . . plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.” The Conservancy uses a variety of science-based conservation strategies to achieve its mission (e.g., land stewardship, policy initiatives, government relations, and land protection). TNC identifies ecologically significant landscapes through ecoregional planning, a large-scale planning process.

Collaborative planning for the Prairie Forest Border Ecoregion involved numerous partners including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the University of Minnesota. The Prairie Forest Border is a transition zone between tallgrass prairies and northern forests, encompassing portions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois. One of 166 ecologically significant areas within the ecoregion, the Cedar Creek/Carlos Avery landscape (CC/CA) is also considered a site of outstanding biodiversity significance, the highest possible ranking of the Minnesota County Biological Survey. This ranking is based on its large size, the extent of 21 intact, high quality native plant communities, and the 28 rare plant and animal species that occur there (Dunevitz et al. 2002).

TNC focuses its work by taking a leadership role in a few, select priority landscapes within each ecoregion, delivering conservation strategies through its community-based conservation programs. In other priority landscapes such as CC/CA, numerous conservation partners are already implementing good conservation strategies, and are poised to lead a joint conservation effort. In CC/CA and other landscapes with strong, local conservation partners, TNC strives to develop a comprehensive understanding of the work of existing conservation organizations and to explore potential complementary roles for the Conservancy. The purpose of this project was to address two key questions for the CC/CA landscape:

- 1) How do the objectives and activities of each individual organization contribute to the conservation goals of the larger landscape, or abate landscape level threats to biodiversity?
- 2) What elements are being missed by current efforts? What are the conservation gaps?

The implicit conservation goal in a conservation area such as CC/CA is to maintain viable occurrences of the conservation targets; that is, to maintain a functional landscape. To ensure that conservation targets are viable, conservation planning must identify key threats and develop strategies to abate those threats. The Conservancy's 5-S planning process helps to identify the top threats in a given landscape, more effectively focusing conservation strategies on these priorities (The Nature Conservancy 2000). The 5-S

approach to conservation planning was used previously to identify and summarize the key threats to biodiversity in the landscape.

Located approximately 40 miles North of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area in Minnesota, CC/CA is experiencing intense pressure from residential and commercial development. It is a highly desirable residential location for its open space and accessibility to Metro jobs. The majority of the landscape is located within two counties: Anoka and Isanti counties. Washington and Chisago counties are located on the eastern edge of this area, but beyond the scope of this project. Anoka and Isanti counties vary greatly in their demographics and funding resources, important factors in conservation activities. Anoka County is inside the Metropolitan Council's jurisdiction for regulations and funding opportunities, and Isanti County, a "collar" county, is outside of the Metropolitan Council's jurisdictions. In 2002, The Nature Conservancy initiated contact with local governmental, non-profit & agency officials in the Cedar Creek Natural History Area (CCNHA) vicinity through the consulting services of Carolyn Carr with Ecological Strategies, LLC. The current CAP/TNC project was initiated to expand the collaboration to landscape level conservation, and to document conservation activities of local conservation organizations, including strategy gaps.

#### Previous Collaboration History

In the summer of 2002, collaborative and outreach work began for the long-term protection of the Cedar Creek Natural History Area (Carr 2002). Three meetings were held with local agency people for identification of threats to biodiversity, and individual interviews were conducted with some of the previous persons and local residents. Two tours of CCNHA were offered and two educational brochures developed, and GIS maps created including a draft of conservation areas for partner review. Awareness of CCNHA was increased with neighboring organizations and local governmental units. Momentum was built regarding collaborative relationships and activities. Several of these activities such as public tours of CCNHA continue, as does enthusiasm for long-term collaboration with other stakeholders. As a result of this effort, the CCNHA directors greatly improved their understanding of the need for public outreach by CCNHA.

Integrated conservation work at CC/CA is challenged by a number of factors. Besides dealing with multiple levels of governmental jurisdiction, different community cultures exist within even the same unit. For example, biodiversity conservation varies as a priority among townships, especially comparing metropolitan and rural townships. Momentum from the initial collaborative effort slowed from funding delays, trickled down from funding cuts to the University by a new state administration. Personnel changes also occurred within some of the organizations during 2003. For example, TNC-Minnesota Director of Conservation Science, Jenny Brown, changed jobs. Her position was vacant for several months, and then filled in August, 2003, by Meredith Cornett. In addition, although numerous agencies and conservation organizations are working within the landscape, a lead organization that can coordinate efforts for common goals has yet to be identified.

CURA/CAP and TNC funded this project in late summer 2003 for a graduate assistant to begin work Fall semester 2003, that then extended into Spring 2004 semester. The CAP

community mentor was Hannah Dunevitz, MN DNR Regional Plant Ecologist, and the faculty mentor was Dr. Leo McAvoy, Department of Recreation, Park, and Leisure Studies at the University of Minnesota. Dr. McAvoy lives in the project area and has experience in collaborative environmental efforts.

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## METHODOLOGY

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Assessment of conservation activities and opportunities in the Cedar Creek/Carlos Avery (CC/CA) landscape required familiarity with assessment protocol, and research with local stakeholders. Once initial background information was gathered from TNC, identification of stakeholders was initiated. Discussions began in October 2003, and continued until the end of March 2004. These discussions were held, when possible, before or after regular meetings of the organization or with individual stakeholders, though sometimes by phone. Initial results were presented to stakeholders at a roundtable meeting held at Cedar Creek Natural History Area (CCNHA) on April 9, 2004 (Appendix B). Outcomes of the roundtable meeting are on page 14. Three approaches were taken in gathering data:

1) Background information

- Familiarity with the conservation framework developed by TNC
  - ◆ TNC's "5-S Framework for Conservation Strategy." This is a conservation model for site conservation planning and measurement of conservation success. This spreadsheet tool allows for identification of specific ecological Systems to be conserved, Stresses (threats) to those systems, Sources of those threats, Strategies for abating threats, and Success of conservation effort through measurement.
- Review of the previous CCNHA collaboration work history (page 4)
- Identification of stakeholders (contacts & resources in Appendix A)
  - ◆ through the previous CCNHA collaboration effort, through professional contacts by the student researcher, and through contacts furnished by the CAP/CURA community mentor, Hannah Dunevitz, and faculty mentor, Dr. Leo McAvoy.

2) Research with identified stakeholders:

- Background & priority conservation efforts
- Review of planning documents, if any
- Role of the organization's conservation efforts within the larger landscape

3) Roundtable meeting: Cedar Creek Natural History Area, April 9, 2004:

- Sharing of initial project results
- Outcomes of meeting



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## RESULTS

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Much information was gathered from the CC/CA stakeholders from individual meetings and from the roundtable meeting. In general, similar threats were identified with varying conservation strategies underway, mostly due to variable staffing and funding resources within the stakeholder group. Most stakeholders are planning for their own jurisdictions, with some collaborative planning beginning to take place between stakeholders. A CC/CA landscape perspective is generally not incorporated into planning efforts directly, though it often comes through for the large-jurisdiction organizations such as the Anoka Conservation District (ACD). Also, the workload and time constraints of stakeholders makes a coordinated, collaborative effort more difficult to implement.

An overriding sense of urgency in biodiversity protection was evident from several stakeholders: Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and ACD, in particular. The rapid pace of building development from the last 10 years seems to be increasing. This was exacerbated when this CAP project brought to light MN Department of Transportation (MNDOT) plans to build a new Interstate 35 access at the current bridge from Chisago County Road 17 between Stacy and North Branch. This road becomes Isanti Co. Rd. 9 less than 2 miles west of I-35, and within another 2 miles passes through the Twin Lakes area, an area identified as having high biodiversity from the MN DNR County Biological Survey (MCBS). Isanti Co. Rd. 9 would probably become an important throughfare between I-35 and Hwy. 65, thereby providing increased access to Metro job commuters. Currently, the Isanti County highway department plans to repave portions of this road in the next 2 years, with no mention of road expansion.

For ease of use, the bulk of the results have been put into tables with brief summary descriptions. The raw data for each of the 11 stakeholders are listed in Appendix C. The results listed are from stakeholder discussions and include activities made known during project discussions.

### **1) Key threats to biodiversity conservation**

The 75,000-acre Cedar Creek/Carlos Avery landscape contains multiple conservation threats to its biologically significant communities. Most of these threats are the result of encroaching residential and commercial development, and were already identified in the Carr report for CCNHA (2002). These were: fire suppression, habitat fragmentation, exotic species, altered hydrology, and increased lake pollution near roads.

Newly identified long-term conservation concerns for CCNHA's research mission are altered viewsheds and light pollution. Light pollution may have an impact on insect migration or movement (Barb Delaney, pers. Commun. 2001), with unknown effects on natural communities. Another long-term threat to this landscape and region as a result of human impact is global warming (Dr. Ed Cushing, Minnesota Native Plant Society Symposium, March 27, 2004). This global threat is difficult to address only at a landscape level, yet does bring out the question regarding the future of the landscape in

150-200 years within the context of a warmer climate globally (for example, the importance of a long-term research site such as Cedar Creek.)

**Table 1. Key threats in the CC/CA Landscape**

<b>Current Key Threats</b>	<b>Noted by (listed alphabetically)</b>	<b>Strategies Used to Abate Threats</b>
<b>Fire Suppression</b> (residential areas nearby):  -Oak Savanna regeneration  -Prairie regeneration  -Cranberry bog regeneration	Carlos Avery  Cedar Creek Natural History Area  Sandhill Crane Natural Area  Isanti County Landowner	Prescribed burns  Experimental restoration techniques, Education: Landowners & teachers  Prescribed burns  Education of neighbor/landowners
<b>Habitat Fragmentation</b>	Anoka Conservation District  Carlos Avery  Cedar Creek Natural History Area  Sandhill Crane Natural Area	Greenways plans, Landowner education (including conservation easements)  Landowner education  Landowner education, Land protection, Proposed teacher education  Preservation through its own establishment, Landowner education (including conservation easements)
<b>Exotic Species</b>	Anoka Conservation District  Anoka County Parks	Restoration of native species  Prescribed burns,

Current Key Threats	Noted by (listed alphabetically)	Strategies Used to Abate Threats
	<p>Carlos Avery</p> <p>Cedar Creek Natural History Area</p> <p>Sandhill Crane Natural Area</p>	<p>removal</p> <p>Prescribed burns, proposed road closures</p> <p>Prescribed burns, removal</p>
<b>Altered Hydrology</b>	<p>Cedar Creek Natural History Area</p> <p>Isanti County Parks</p> <p>Linwood Township Parks</p>	<p>Proposed road changes, Education: Landowners &amp; teachers</p> <p>Awareness by Director, networking with county highway department &amp; DNR</p> <p>None</p>

**2) Key conservation strategies and activities currently being implemented by stakeholders**

Since the completion of the Carr study (2002), several new activities by partner organizations have occurred: ACD has distributed landowner education packets to owners of parcels 10 acres or larger that contain high-priority native habitats, and MPCA landfill insurance monies are now available for land acquisition (Table 4). Hannah Dunevitz, DNR Natural Heritage Program, has been instrumental in networking with Isanti Parks and the Sandhill Crane Management team regarding awareness and use of the landfill insurance monies. Education of landowner and local public officials on biodiversity conservation is a high priority strategy for most stakeholders, with land protection through easements and habitat management the top strategy.

**Table 2. Key Conservation Strategies**

<b>Conservation Strategies</b>	<b>Conservation Activities</b>	<b>Stakeholder</b>
<b>Education</b>  1) Local landowner contact through letters and leaflets (see Attachments)  2) Informal neighbor contacts  3) Ongoing education of municipal officials  4) Habitat education	1) One possible conservation easement on parcel located near CCNHA, several property walk-throughs, and 3 contacts – two stopped digging in fens, one used cost-share native plant seed on a vacant lot.  2) Coffee meetings with longtime neighbors regarding land protection options – ongoing  3) Presented at Linwood Planning and Zoning meeting – township policy is not conducive for successful conservation efforts. (Also presented at other townships)  4) Isanti County Wayside Prairie Park – bogwalk and plant list from inventory of this poor fen  4) Bike tour of Isanti County parks	1) Anoka Conservation District  2) Tom Anderson  3) Anoka Conservation District  4) Isanti County Environmental Coalition & Isanti County Parks & Recreation
<b>Exotic Species Control</b>	1) Buckthorn management  2) Prescribed burns	Anoka County Parks, Carlos Avery, Cedar Creek NHA, Sandhill Crane Natural Area

Conservation Strategies	Conservation Activities	Stakeholder
<b>Networking</b>	1) Potential conservation easement acquisition of oak forest property located at south end of Carlos Avery WMA. 2) Public stewardship: new trail access 3) Light pollution: pledge to cap new lights 4) Restoration using local native prairie seed	1) ACD, TNC & DNR Natural Heritage Program 2) CCNHA & City of East Bethel 3) Isanti Env. Coalition & East Central Energy Co-op 4) CCNHA & ACD
<b>Land Protection</b>	Conservation easements: 1) Potential conservation easement acquisition of oak forest property located at south end of Carlos Avery WMA. <i>Status: still in negotiation with landowner</i> 2) Money available for purchase in prioritized MCBS-identified areas 3) Proposed in plan visioning	1) ACD, DNR Natural Heritage Program, & TNC 2) Anoka Cons. District 3) Carlos Avery, Cedar Creek NHA, Sandhill Crane Natural Area

**Table 2. Key Conservation Strategies – continued** *I can't get this to the top, otherwise I definitely would!*

### 3) Planning documents

Planning documents, though useful in providing long-term vision and a larger landscape-style context, did not seem to be referenced much for practical purposes. In fact, not all CC/CA stakeholder organizations use planning documents, mostly because of outdated material, a result of limited time and funding resources. This is the case for Isanti County Parks and Carlos A very Wildlife Management Area (Table 4). The primary planning staff for these organizations, Parks Director Steve Nelson and Assistant Manager Bob Fashingbauer, are aware of biodiversity issues. And, Isanti County Parks planning commission advocates open, rural greenspace to balance the emphasis by townships for recreational open space. However, their time and funding resources limit the amount of biodiversity foregrounding, for example, specific plant-community protection in Oxford Township.

Within a landscape context, plans for Anoka County Parks and Sandhill Crane Natural Area emphasize management and restoration of native plant communities. The Anoka Conservation District is using parcel mapping and the Minnesota Landscape Cover Classification System (MLCCS) plus the MCBS data to prioritize areas for protection. These parcel landowners were then identified and sent informational letters (Attachment 1). Mikelson WMA is also a very high priority for the ACD because of its upland oak, rich fen and other communities. One adjacent property to Mikelson WMA was recently put into conservation easement.

**Table 3. Existing stakeholder plans**

Organization	Represented by	Planning Document - (latest version)
Anoka Conservation District	Rich Biske	1) District Comprehensive (comp.) Plan, 2004 – waiting for board signature.  2) Metro Greenways management plans in place for Linwood Township and the City of East Bethel. These include summaries of natural resources, plus land protection and management tools.
Anoka County	Spencer Pierce, Environmental Services Department Manager  Met. Council Liaison: Kate Garwood 763.862.4230	Anoka County has no Comp Plan – goes to Metropolitan Council; zoning administered by township and municipality. ACD and Parks Dept. cover natural resources management, and DNR covers shoreline and river setbacks (1,000' & 300', respectively)

Organization	Represented by	Planning Document - (latest version)
Anoka County Parks	Jeff Perry	2020 Vision: Anoka County Parks and Recreation System Plan - 1998. <u>Revision due in 2005</u> . (Also have Master Plans for specific parks)
Carlos Avery WMA	Bob Fashingbauer	No plan updated enough for use, but conservation targets are oak savanna, oak forest, and prairie habitats, and tubercled rein orchid.
Cedar Creek Natural History Area	Clarence Lehman	Comprehensive Plan for Entering the New Century – Draft. 2000.
City of East Bethel	Bill Boyer	East Bethel is in the process of revising ordinances, 168, to assist in protecting sensitive areas.
Isanti County	Administration Department (763.689.5165)	County Comprehensive Plan in place, though zoning ordinance may be changed from 2 dwellings/40 acres for higher residential density because of heavy pressure from developers.
Isanti County Environmental Coalition	Susan Blom	None, but have at least one activity per year from 3 areas of focus: education, zoning, & service project
Isanti County Parks & Recreation	Steve Nelson	Recreation/Open Space Plan – last updated 1996. Parks planning commission considering 100 acres of open, rural greenspace to balance the township ballfields.
Sandhill Crane Natural Area	Jeff Perry	Sandhill Crane Natural Area Master Plan - December 2001

**Table 3. Existing stakeholder plans - continued**

#### 4) Roundtable Meeting

Comments received regarding the roundtable meeting of April 9, 2004, were positive. The diversity of stakeholder attendance was a primary factor. Meredith Cornett of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) facilitated the meeting, and supplied a map showing TNC's priority projects over the next 3 years. TNC was clear that it is not a major funding source for land acquisition in the CC/CA landscape, but has been recently involved in a specific negotiation at the south end of Carlos Avery WMA.

The inclusion and participation of local government officials was especially welcomed and deemed important (Appendix A). The sentiment at the roundtable meeting was to work at local levels, for example within a township, with some networking continuing, but not in a coordinated collaboration involving regular meetings. Another roundtable meeting was not, therefore, scheduled.

Other results were:

- ✓ Hannah Dunevitz gained landowner contacts in southeast Isanti County
  - a meeting with Tom Anderson and 4 other residents of Twin Lakes
  - a second meeting the following week with more neighbors
  - a plan for some outreach events in the Twin Lakes area
- ✓ Bill Boyer of the City of East Bethel requested information regarding natural area protection
  - Dawn Doering delivered information about the Duluth Natural Area Program (DNAP)- [www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/planning/dnap/dnap.htm](http://www.ci.duluth.mn.us/city/planning/dnap/dnap.htm)
- ✓ Networking
  - exchange of conservation activities by stakeholders Ex., ACD's landowner information packets that were passed around to participants
  - knowledge of possible funding sources (Table 4)



**Table 4. Possible Contacts for Land Protection and Planning Funding**

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>email</b>
Drewry	Kate	DNR Metro Greenways	St. Paul, MN	651-772.7946	<a href="mailto:kate.drewry@dnr.state.mn.us">kate.drewry@dnr.state.mn.us</a>
Pfeiffer	Sharon	DNR Regional Planner	St. Paul, MN	651-772.7982	<a href="mailto:sharon.pfeiffer@dnr.state.mn.us">sharon.pfeiffer@dnr.state.mn.us</a>
Dunevitz	Hannah	DNR Regional Ecologist	Natural Heritage Program St. Paul, MN	651-772.7570	<a href="mailto:hannah.dunevitz@dnr.state.mn.us">hannah.dunevitz@dnr.state.mn.us</a>
Ekola	Lindberg	<i>Potential Source – early stages of planning in this region</i> Forest Resources Council Planner	Upper Buford Circle St. Paul, MN 55108	651- 603-0109	<a href="mailto:mfrfc@forestry.umn.edu">mfrfc@forestry.umn.edu</a>  <a href="http://www.frc.state.mn.us/">www.frc.state.mn.us/</a>
Collins	Pat	Remediation Fund Grant Program, administered by Ecological Services.		218-834-6612	<a href="http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/land/remediation_fund.html">http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/land/remediation_fund.html</a>
Morehouse	Keith	North American Wetlands Conservation Act Small Grants	Division of Bird Habitat Conservation U.S. FWS 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Mailstop MBSP 4075 Arlington, Virginia 22203	Attn: Small Grants Coordinator	<a href="mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov">keith_morehouse@fws.gov</a>  <a href="http://northamerican.fws.gov/NAWCA/USsmallgrants.html">http://northamerican.fws.gov/NAWCA/USsmallgrants.html</a>

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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In summary, the Cedar Creek/Carlos Avery landscape contains not only biologically diverse habitats, but also diverse land management stakeholders representing multiple levels of government that may have overlapping geographical jurisdictions, plus non-governmental organizations and individuals. Of key importance to understanding conservation opportunities, especially for coordination of efforts, is the understanding of stakeholder profiles. For example, Linwood Township Park Board feels relatively insulated from development encroachment because the township is near large, protected public areas such as Carlos Avery WMA and Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes Regional. Yet, the county commissioner for the Linwood area reports concern regarding increased development (traffic, water quality, etc.) on the part of her constituents. Another stakeholder profile is an Isanti County landowner, Tom Anderson, who has been proactive in educating neighboring landowners in conservation easement possibilities. Tom is a 5<sup>th</sup>-generation landowner who is also a conservation professional - Director of the Science Museum of Minnesota's Warner Nature Center in Marine, MN. Though he has a good trust relationship with his Oxford Township neighbors, they still tend to be suspicious of newer land-use plans such as conservation easements for private landowners. As a result of this project, Tom has coordinated informal educational events that include Hannah Dunevitz.

Most of the local stakeholders contacted are interested in networking, yet have limited time or funding to attend to matters beyond immediate organizational concerns. The DNR Natural Heritage Program may be able to serve in a coordination role among stakeholders. A group email list might be appropriate to which stakeholders could send any management news, requests for assistance, or brainstorming ideas. Those stakeholders without email could check in with Hannah Dunevitz periodically for updates.

A more formal collaboration of stakeholders is recommended within the next 5 years, especially if development pressure is even greater, as is expected. This collaboration could use a hired coordinator or consultant to coordinate landscape-level natural resources planning and protection recommendations, education, and stewardship. Funding could come through grants with matched monies from the stakeholders, each contributing in-kind or with actual dollars. This person would then have the time to integrate and network with highway planning departments, and preferably have the education experience to assist with stewardship efforts such as coordination of localized "Friends" groups modeled after the Friends of Wild River State Park (not modeled after a larger planning and resource management groups such as Friends of the Mississippi River - an effective, but urban-oriented group). These localized "Friends" groups of neighbors and users could promote stewardship through specific events; the Friends of Wild River State Park sometimes also use these events to raise funds for the Park. These events become more popular as they become known annually. One example might be prairie seed collecting by volunteers at CCNHA or Carlos Avery for use in nearby restorations,

perhaps even by landowners. This event at Wild River State park is actually coordinated by their naturalist, Dave Crawford, who would be a good reference for researching the resources needed for such an event. Friends groups could also make awards to landowners who preserve natural habitats on their property, or a more formal registry and easements could be undertaken.

Some stakeholders are already part of one type of collaboration through an interagency management team that manages the new Sandhill Crane Natural Area (SCNA) located south of CCNHA. These include: Jeff Perry of the Anoka Parks Department, Hannah Dunevitz of the MN DNR, and the Anoka Conservation District. (Other entities involved with the management of SCNA include the City of East Bethel's Brad LeTourneau, MN DNR's forester Art Widerstrom, and Jean Hanson and Joe Julik of the MN Pollution Control Agency.) This natural area is a result of an award-winning collaboration of the above entities that owned property in this unique natural area; the collaboration focusing on planning and resource management needs. This is a more intensive model of collaboration that is not presently recommended for the CC/CA landscape. However, a less intensive version of this may be necessary in the next 10 years for acquiring funding resources, wherein stakeholders meet regularly to integrate planning processes and share technological or knowledge resources at the landscape level.

Generally, stakeholders bring different strengths to the landscape. Natural resource management techniques are being planned and implemented by Anoka Parks, the DNR & TNC, and researched at CCNHA. The ACD and the Isanti Environmental Coalition actively pursue education of private landowners and local government officials. And, the Isanti County government and Parks have a respectful, close network for ease of communication.

One stakeholder missing from this report and from some maps including the Anoka Trail Corridors Map (Attachment 3) is the Mikelson WMA – a high priority area for the ACD, and recently expanded from the addition of an adjacent property. This WMA contains many MCBS-identified communities and faces similar landscape-level threats. Including this WMA in the networking with Hannah Dunevitz and any future landscape-level coordination is recommended. Accordingly, expansion of the network into neighboring Chisago County is also recommended, especially if future collaborative actions occur, since Carlos Avery WMA and the Sunrise River watershed are also located there.

#### **Key gaps in current plans/activities**

Some gaps in planning, education, and natural resource management exist that impact at the landscape level as well as the local levels. Key gaps are listed alphabetically (Table 6). Both counties need more education of biodiversity needs for current local land-use decision-makers, and more conservation-minded officials. Members of large conservation organizations might be recruited for this, or trainings could occur through the MN Township Association or through a natural resources planning consultant. Then more coordination could happen between natural resource professionals and the government decision makers.

Though many County Biological Survey sites are located in southeastern Isanti County, there has been limited conservation funding and attention brought to this area. The protected areas are small and of less ecological quality, while the high quality areas are unprotected. For example, the 1970 Isanti Parks Plan sited a proposed campground in Oxford Township near Upper Birch Lake (not sited in the 1996 plan), with no plans for non-recreational open space. The Isanti Parks Director and Parks Planning Commission know of the need for biodiversity as well as recreational parks in this area, but the part-time Parks Director position is too limiting. For adequate natural resources protection planning, an assessment of natural resources within Isanti county, especially in Oxford and Athens townships, could be done by an outside consultant using land cover data currently being gathered, and land protection recommendations given. For implementation of these recommendations, the Parks Director would need more hours and the resources to carry them out. If a landscape-level coordinator is hired for the CC/CA landscape, they could work together to implement the land protection recommendations such as conservation easements.

Land acquisition by conservation organizations, though the ultimate form of land protection, is not strongly recommended as a conservation strategy due to the current high land prices plus limited funding resources for all stakeholders. When monies are available for such measures, it is recommended for stakeholders to have prioritized parcels identified, as modeled by the Anoka Conservation District.

**Table 6. Key Gaps in Conservation & Recommended Strategies**

<b>Key Gap</b>	<b>Recommended Strategy</b>	<b>Potential lead:</b>
<b>Altered hydrology from roads</b>	Alter highway maintenance and construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) to better protect unique wetland plant communities (fens, bogs)	DNR
<b>Education</b>		
1) Public stewardship	1) Share ideas, publication resources, etc. for "Friends of..." groups comprised of neighboring landowners, visitors, recreational users	1) CCNHA, Carlos Avery, Isanti Environmental Coalition, Sandhill Crane Natural Area
2) Local Government	2) Position conservation-minded individuals in these commissions  2a) Lobby for natural resource training for local commissioners and planners	2) ACD, Carlos Avery, CCNHA, Isanti Environmental Coalition,  2a) DNR

<b>Key Gap</b>	<b>Recommended Strategy</b>	<b>Potential lead:</b>
<b>Exotics dispersal via trails</b>	Locate trail corridors on edge of natural areas or through less unique areas	Anoka Parks, ACD, CCNHA, DNR, Isanti Parks
<b>Fire Suppression</b>	Prescribed burning plan coordination for oak savannas through email network	Carlos Avery, CCNHA, DNR, Isanti Parks, Sandhill Crane Natural Area
<b>Planning</b>	<p>1) Natural resource protection plan</p> <p>2) Buffer zones - research for appropriate sizes for varying natural habitats</p> <p>3) Communication network established between stakeholders that can develop into more formal collaboration as needed; including Mikelson WMA</p>	<p>1) Isanti County</p> <p>2) DNR</p> <p>3) All stakeholders</p>

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## Appendix A

### PROJECT CONTACTS & RESOURCES

<i>Last Name</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>email</i>	<i>Project Contact</i>	<i>April 9, 2004, Meeting Attendant</i>
Cornett	Meredith	The Nature Conservancy, <i>Project Supervisor</i>	394 S Lake Ave. Duluth, MN 55802	218-727.6119	<a href="mailto:mcornett@tnc.org">mcornett@tnc.org</a>	✓	✓
Fuller	Garth	The Nature Conservancy, <i>Program Director</i>	Central Minnesota Office	218-575.3032	<a href="mailto:gfuller@tnc.org">gfuller@tnc.org</a>	✓	
Dunevitz	Hannah	DNR Land Protection Specialist, <i>Community Mentor</i>	Natural Heritage Program St. Paul, MN	651-772.7570	<a href="mailto:hannah.dunevitz@dnr.state.mn.us">hannah.dunevitz@dnr.state.mn.us</a>	✓	✓
McAvoy	Leo	University of MN – <i>Faculty mentor</i>	Dept. of Rec., Park & Leisure Studies	612-625.5887	<a href="mailto:mcavo001@umn.edu">mcavo001@umn.edu</a>	✓	
Doering	Dawn	University of MN <i>Graduate Research Assistant</i>	13078 347 <sup>th</sup> St. Lindstrom, Mn 55045	651-257.9626	<a href="mailto:drdoering@4dintsys.com">drdoering@4dintsys.com</a>	✓	✓
Anderson	Maury	Local Landowner, County Park Board Chair	Oxford Township, Isanti County	651-462.5834	None	✓	✓
Anderson	Tom	Local landowner, SMM's Warner Nature Center Director	Oxford Township, Isanti County	651-433.2427	<a href="mailto:tanderson@smm.org">tanderson@smm.org</a>	✓	✓
Biske	Rich	Wildlife Habitat Tech., Anoka Conservation District	16015 Central Ave. NE, Ham Lake, MN 55304	763-434.2030 ext. 11	<a href="mailto:rich.biske@anokaswcd.org">rich.biske@anokaswcd.org</a>	✓	✓
Blom	Susan	Isanti County Environmental Coalition	Cambridge, Isanti County	763-689.5250	None	✓	
Boyer	Bill	City of East Bethel Commissioner	East Bethel, MN	763-434.0637	<a href="mailto:BBADGER222@aol.com">BBADGER222@aol.com</a>		✓
Drewry	Kate	MN DNR Metro Greenways	St. Paul, MN	651-772.7946	<a href="mailto:kate.drewry@dnr.state.mn.us">kate.drewry@dnr.state.mn.us</a>		✓

## Appendix A - Continued

### PROJECT CONTACTS & RESOURCES

<i>Last Name</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>email</i>	<i>Project Contact</i>	<i>April 9, 2004, Meeting</i>
Fashingbauer	Bob	Carlos Avery WMA	18310 Zodiac Street, Forest Lake, MN 55025	651-296.5290	<a href="mailto:robert.fashingbauer@dnr.state.mn.us">robert.fashingbauer@dnr.state.mn.us</a>	✓	✓
Garrison	Jim	Park Board Chair	Linwood Township	651-462.4504	<a href="mailto:jimgarrison@hotmail.com">jimgarrison@hotmail.com</a>	✓	
Landwehr	Tom	The Nature Conservancy	Minneapolis Regional Office	612-331.0705	<a href="mailto:tlandwehr@tnc.org">tlandwehr@tnc.org</a>		✓
Lehman	Clarence	Cedar Creek Natural History Area	UMN – EEB Dept., St. Paul	612-625.5734	<a href="mailto:lehman@umn.edu">lehman@umn.edu</a>	✓	✓
McGriff	Ron	Isanti County Planning Commission	Isanti County	320-396.3951	<a href="mailto:ronm@ecenet.com">ronm@ecenet.com</a>	✓	✓
Mueller	Mike	MN DNR Area Hydrologist	555 18 <sup>th</sup> Ave. SW Cambridge, MN	763-689.7105	<a href="mailto:mike.mueller@dnr.state.mn.us">mike.mueller@dnr.state.mn.us</a>		✓
Nelson	Steve	Isanti County Parks	555 18 <sup>th</sup> Ave. SW Cambridge, MN 55008	763-689.8220	<a href="mailto:steve.nelson@co.isanti.mn.us">steve.nelson@co.isanti.mn.us</a>	✓	✓
Perry	Jeff	Anoka County Parks	1350 Bunker Lake Blvd. Andover, MN 55304	763-767.2896	<a href="mailto:jeff.perry@co.anoka.mn.us">jeff.perry@co.anoka.mn.us</a>	✓	
Pfeiffer	Sharon	MN DNR Regional Planner	St. Paul, MN	651-772.7982	<a href="mailto:sharon.pfeiffer@dnr.state.mn.us">sharon.pfeiffer@dnr.state.mn.us</a>		✓
Pierce	Spencer	Anoka County Environmental Services Department Manager	Anoka, MN	763-422.7063		✓	
Seemon	Dan	Regional Environmental Protection Assistant, US Army Corps Of Engineers	Army Corps of Engineers Centre 190 5 <sup>th</sup> Street St. Paul 55101	651-290.5380	<a href="mailto:daniel.j.seemon@usace.army.mil">daniel.j.seemon@usace.army.mil</a>		✓
Sivarajah	Rhonda	Anoka County Commissioner	District 6	763-323.5700	<a href="mailto:rhonda.sivarajah@co.anoka.mn.us">rhonda.sivarajah@co.anoka.mn.us</a>	✓	(sick child)
Wicht	Gene	Isanti County Commissioner	District 4	763-444.4213	None		✓



## Appendix B

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### CEDAR CREEK/CARLOS AVERY STAKEHOLDERS

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1. Anoka Conservation District
2. Anoka County Commissioners
3. Anoka County Parks Department
4. Army Corps of Engineers – wetlands regulation
5. Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area – MN DNR
6. Isanti County Commission
7. Isanti County Environmental Coalition
8. Isanti County Planning Commission
9. Isanti County Parks
10. Isanti County Parks Planning Commission
11. Independent landowners such as Tom Anderson (Isanti County)
12. Linwood Township – Parks Commission
13. Mikelson Wildlife Management Area – MN DNR\*\*
14. MN Department of Natural Resources – Area Hydrologist
15. MN Department of Natural Resources – Plant Ecologist/Land Protection Specialist
16. MN Department of Natural Resources – Regional Planner
17. The Nature Conservancy (TNC)
18. University of Minnesota - Cedar Creek Natural History Area

\*\*Not contacted

## Appendix C

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### ORGANIZATIONAL CONCERNS, LISTED ALPHABETICALLY

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#### ➤ ANOKA CONSERVATION DISTRICT (ACD) - Rich Biske

**Background** ACD works under tax levy as a soil and water district. A primary mission is to implement the Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act (WCA) with new plats and subdivisions. It also works with municipalities and other governmental units to obtain and implement grant funding such as Metro Greenways and Wildlife Corridor monies. Wetland Specialist, Becky Wozney, is part of the Sandhill Crane Natural Area management team.

So far, erosion has been little problem, though some ATV activity has been occurring in Linwood School Forest located in Linwood Township.

**Activities** Rich is involved in several activities, mostly educational:

- Local landowner contact – 90 landowners were contacted who have been identified as having priority habitats on their property. Parcels considered in two categories: over 10 acres, and under 10 acres (mostly 5-acre splits). Contact modeled a Dakota County program: a cover letter with a Natural Communities brochure, an aerial photograph of the property identifying location of the priority habitat, and a landscape-level map of the property, proposed greenways, and nearby parks. (Attachment 1)
  - ✓ **Results: One possible conservation easement on a parcel located near Cedar Creek Natural History Area,**
  - ✓ **plus a couple of property walk-throughs for explanation and identification**
  - Six neighborhoods were visited and left with door hangers requesting neighborhood volunteers for backyard/natural community tours. (Attachment 2)
    - ✓ **Results: Three contacts – two stopped digging in fens,**
    - ✓ **one used cost-shared native plant seed on a vacant lot.**
- Collaborated with The Nature Conservancy and Hannah Dunevitz of MN DNR Natural Heritage Program on potential conservation easement acquisition of oak forest property located at south end of Carlos Avery WMA. **Status: still in negotiation with landowner**
- Ongoing education of municipal officials
  - ✓ **Results: Presented at Linwood Planning and Zoning meeting – township policy is not conducive for successful conservation efforts**

➤ **ANOKA COUNTY** - Contact: Jeff Perry, Parks Department

**Background** Anoka County Parks total approximately 10,000 acres, and has two natural resource specialists on staff in this rapidly-developing Metropolitan county. Jeff Perry is responsible for managing the natural resources across the entire system, and is also spearheading the Sandhill Crane Natural Area management team that also includes Anoka Parks Director, John Von DeLinde.

Their primary planning document for the parks system is the "2020 Vision: Anoka County Parks and Recreation System Plan" produced in 1998 which contains a specific natural resources management chapter. And, they are currently in the process of revising this comprehensive plan with anticipated completion in 2005.

We also have some recent master plans for some of our Regional Parks such as Bunker Hills, Rice Creek Chain of Lakes, Rum River Central, Coon Rapids Dam. There is a natural resources management section within each of these.

**Activities** Jeff is involved in several activities including restoration efforts:

- GIS Master Trail Corridor map
  - ✓ **Results: Proposed Regional trail corridors include linking Linwood Township, including Carlos Avery WMA, with Coon Lake County Park to the south, and with Lake George Regional Park to the east. (Attachment 3)**
- Prairie management
  - ✓ **Result: Prescribed burns conducted on Coon Lake County Park prairie remnants**
- Restoration efforts
  - ✓ **Results: Prairie restoration at Sandhill Crane Natural Area,**
  - ✓ **Buckthorn removal begun at Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes Regional Park**

➤ **CARLOS AVERY WMA** - Contact: Bob Fashingbauer, Assistant Manager

**Background** Carlos Avery Wildlife Management Area is a one-time game farm of 23,000 acres located in northeast Anoka County and southwest Chisago County along the Sunrise River. Funding, like most Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), is from hunting license fees; management, therefore, caters primarily to hunters' needs. No ATVs, horses, snowmobiling, or camping allowed.

**Activities** Bob is new to the staff and brings with him a long-range planning perspective:

- Border land acquisition to straighten out boundaries, thereby saving fencing and signage costs
- Conservation targets of oak forests, oak savannas, prairie remnants, and tubercled-rein orchid in the southern area.
- Education of neighboring landowners – would like to have a “Friends of Carlos Avery” group, initiated with an informational packet

**Threats**

- Exotics – purple loosestrife, and buckthorn coming to south end
- Habitat fragmentation from encroaching residential development
- Dissatisfied neighboring landowners from: historical condemnation of land, misinformation by realtors regarding lack of hunting & burning buffer, trespass issues, and wildlife conflicts

- **CEDAR CREEK NATURAL HISTORY AREA** - Contact: Clarence Lehman,  
Associate Program Director

**Background** Cedar Creek was established in 1942 by the Regents of the University of Minnesota. It is now a registered National Historical Landmark, a National Science Foundation long-term ecological research site and microbial observatory, and a Department of Energy free-air carbon dioxide exchange site (Lehman 2000).

**Activities**

- Savanna restoration (technique experimentation) and preservation
- Seeking some road closures such as around Beckman Lake
- Developing a Land Acquisition Plan: 1) conservation easements, 2) First right of refusal, 3) purchase-eminent domain and condemnation as last resorts
- Developing a "Friends of CCNHA" group
- Developing a teacher-training facility/program

**Threats**

- Fire suppression
- Diminishing availability of abandoned farm land
- Pollution entering Beckman Lake
- Light pollution
- Exotics: Eurasian water milfoil, black locust, buckthorn, purple loosestrife
- Altered viewshed

- **ISANTI COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COALITION** - Contact: Susan Blom, Co-chair and co-founder

**Background** ICEC was started in 1989 in reaction to a possible Metro airport expansion, and successfully stopped the airport coming in. It promotes natural history education, land stewardship, service projects, and presents an environmental "presence" at local planning hearings promoting 'smart growth.' It is not a non-profit; it is purely a volunteer effort.

### **Results**

- ✓ Helped establish a county park along the Rum River in the north of Cambridge. Now they may want to help establish one in the south.
- ✓ Established an educational wetland wayside including boardwalk and vegetation data collection.
- ✓ Some members instrumental in securing "Active Living by Design" for a trail and activities from Cambridge to Isanti along the Rum River (\$200,000 grant, 1 of 25 given in the country).

- **ISANTI COUNTY PARKS** - Contact: Steve Nelson, Parks Director

**Background** Steve is a forester by training and is funded 24 hours/week for Parks work. He makes a living by forest firefighting, and also doing oak wilt education, identification, and logging work in the region. He has worked in the area since 1996. Two parks commissioners are also interested in this project: Maury Anderson, chair of the county Park Board, retired St. Anthony Parks Director, and Oxford township landowner; and Ron McGriff, county Planning Commissioner. Ron is a co-founder of ICEC.

### **Activities**

- Has collaborated with Hannah Dunevitz on prioritizing parcels for protection
- Considering possible park site in southern Isanti County near Shoebring WMA, and north of Typo Lake
- Develop a trail or corridor that would link with the East Anoka Regional Trail near Typo Lake
- References Natural Heritage Database data for parcel priority

### Threats

- Possible hydrology changes in fen wetlands along Isanti County Road 9, the Isanti counterpart of Chisago County Road 17, that is due for paving in 2006 as a response to the new Interstate-35 interchange between Stacy and North Branch.

➤ **LINWOOD TOWNSHIP** - Contact: Jim Garrison, Park Board Chair

**Background** Jim lives on Martin Lake and owns the Snyder Drugstore in Lindstrom. Conservation has not been brought up as an issue for the Park Board. They hesitate to have more parks because they require more maintenance, and therefore money. Their parks are small, yet people have access to larger county parks and Carlos Avery WMA, and Linwood School Forest.

### Activities

- Attending this project's meeting
- **LOCAL LANDOWNER** - Contact: Tom Anderson, resident of Isanti County

**Background** Tom is currently Director of Lee and Rose Warner Nature Center operated by the Science Museum of Minnesota in Washington County. His family has several properties from over two generations of settling in this part of the county.

### Activities

- Talking to family and neighbors about conservation easements
- Protect Twin Lakes area where Sandhill Cranes nest
- Protect Horseshoe Lake which has a 60' muck layer where UMN Ichthyologist Sam Eddy lived and had students do research

### Threats Fire Suppression

**Attachment 1**  
**ACD Landowner packet**



Attachment 2  
ACD door hanger

**Attachment 3**  
**Anoka Parks Trail Corridors Map**

**Attachment 4**  
**Interstate 35 - New Interchange Map**

**Attachment 5**  
**Agenda from April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Roundtable Meeting**